

Contributed

THE PROPOSED NEW PROOF TEXTS.

By E. C. Gordon.

It seems difficult for some brethren to get this matter straight. Hence I ask attention to a few more words of explanation.

1. The matter has passed out of the hands of the ad interim committee, and is now in the hands of the Executive Committee of Publication and the Presbyteries. If brethren desire to have that committee incur an expense of several thousand dollars in printing a work which may become waste paper in a few months, they should agree in advance to bear the responsibility.

2. The names and addresses of the presbyterial examining committees should be sent to the office of publication at Richmond, Virginia, and not to me, as some brethren are doing.

3. The decisions of the Presbyteries should be sent duly authenticated to the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly.

4. The General Assembly has not called for personal or presbyterial criticisms of this work. Criticisms, whether personal or presbyterial are, of course, always in order. But these should not be confounded with what the General Assembly has asked the Presbyteries to do. It is understood, of course, that there will be criticisms. But these are designed to determine whether or not the new proof texts are as a whole better than the old. And the Presbyteries are asked to say, after due examination, made according to their own orders, whether or not they prefer the new rather than the old. In a word, the question before the Presbyteries is not whether or not the new set of texts may not be improved in some, in many respects. Most of us of the ad interim committee think that it can be improved in some respects; we differ as to which respects. But there is an end to all things. Our ministers and lower church courts have been urged to make suggestions. A large part of the work has already been published. Suggestions have been made by brethren and very carefully considered. There is now a great demand for new plates for the printing of a new edition of the doctrinal Standards. To undertake now to open up anew the whole question of revision in detail, would be at once endless and needless. Let it be at once admitted that the new texts are by no means ideally the best. The question is, Are they on the whole better than the old? If so, let the Presbyteries say so, and let us print them in the new editions of the Standards.

5. As to the versions. The text of the old version is to be used even to the use of italics, with insignificant exceptions. The only one I now recall is in the case of Hos. 6: 7, cited to sustain Confession of Faith, Chapter VII, Section VI, Letter n. The translation in the text of the A. R. V. is, in the opinion of the committee, far more apt than the trans-

lation of the old version. The fact that the revised translation is used is noted.

So far as I can learn, our Church has not formally authorized the use of any version. The Directory of Worship says: "The Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments shall be read from the most approved translation, in the vulgar tongue, that all may hear and understand"; but what is the most approved translation is not stated in the Directory, nor elsewhere in our Standards; nor by any deliverance that I can find of our General Assembly. In 1882 the General Assembly declined to take any action as to the revised version of the New Testament, for the reason that the work of the revisers was not completed. The simple truth is, that every minister is at liberty to use any version; and, in his exposition of the Scriptures, to make one for himself. For us, the Scriptures in the original languages are authoritative. Our ministerial expositions must be in accordance with these as they are interpreted by our doctrinal Standards.

6. I beg leave to say, with all respect to some of our brethren, that they are taking this revision of the citation of proof texts somewhat too seriously. It is an important matter; and a good deal of hard work and some money has been expended on it under the directions of our General Assembly. If changes are to be made, now is a good time to make them. A new set of plates for the future printing of the doctrinal Standards is a pressing business necessity.

The old citations are unworthy of a church that boasts of its intelligence, Biblical scholarship and reverence for the Word of God. This is true, quite independently of the merits or demerits of the new set of citations, in regard to which it is not my province to speak. To cite 1 John 5: 7, and other passages, which competent scholars reject as no part of the Scriptures, and the opinions and arguments of Job's friends, repudiated by God himself, as the very Word of God, is not to reverence, but to dishonor the Scriptures.

After all, important as it is to have a well-selected set of citations, the proof texts are not, as proof texts, authoritative. Every man is entitled to select his own proof texts. The Church deems it wise to print along with its doctrinal Standards certain passages as examples of the Scriptures which it regards as supports to its doctrinal statements. These are guides to her people in comparing the Standards with the Scriptures. It is highly desirable to have them, as far as practicable, genuine, revelant, apt, cogent.

The question which the General Assembly asks the Presbyteries to vote on is this: Are the new citations on the whole so much better than the old, as to justify their use in the forthcoming editions of the Standards?

Lexington, Missouri.

Victory over selfishness is rewarded by that deeper insight and clearer vision which gives the true interpretation of life's problems.

MAST SEMINARY.

In the northern part of the mountain section of North Carolina, lies the county of Watauga; and in the extreme northern part of this county is situated the wee village of Mast, and occupying a prominent place in this village, is Mast Seminary, and thereby hangs a tale.

Some twelve or fourteen years ago Rev. R. P. Pell was evangelist in this loveliest section of a most beautiful county. At Mast he erected a building costing something over \$300 to be used as a school and church. A few years later, for reasons unnecessary to state here, the house was sold to Mr. N. L. Mast for what it had cost. Mr. Mast is a wealthy merchant with a big heart and a most earnest desire to educate the children of the mountains. He spent over \$1,000 enlarging and improving the building, making of it a very substantial and comfortable school house. Realizing that he would be unable by himself to do what he so ardently wished, he offered the property to the Methodist Church, but they were unable at that time to accept the offer (although they recognized its value), because the school was on the extreme border of their conference. Mr. Mast then offered to give the property to the Presbyterian Church, and in addition to the gift of the building he offered a rental lease on a good ten-room dwelling and three acre-lot for a dormitory, at the nominal rent of \$50 per year, with the rent free for first year—this lease is for five years. He also gave a purchase option on five acres of land adjoining the school, for expansion.

At first the idea was to make this the co-educational department of Lees-McRae Institute, but after more careful consideration it was thought best to make it a separate school. So at the last meeting of Concord Presbytery, at Banner Elk, the offer was presented, the school, Mast Seminary, was formally received, and a special board of directors was appointed consisting of Rev. T. E. P. Woods, Rev. Edgar Tufts, Rev. W. S. Wilson, Mr. N. L. Mast, and Dr. C. E. Reed.

The school is ideally situated to reach the young people of the mountains. It is in a beautiful valley, accessible to the mountain section of Virginia, Tennessee and North Carolina. The school is in the center of a thickly settled neighborhood of prosperous farmers, within a radius of three miles there are over 400 children of school age. There is a demand in the country for a high grade preparatory school, and this opportunity is a great one for our Church.

Mast Seminary has opened modestly with about forty pupils and is steadily growing. It is distinctly a preparatory school, but in these days of high standards for the college this means of high standard for the preparatory school. So the curriculum is more than the ordinary high school, the instruction is thorough, and the moral and spiritual influence is the best.

The dormitory under the management of the principal and his wife has proven